DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 262 849 JC 850 569

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TITLE What Is the Relationship between the Age of the Audience and the Effectiveness of Marketing Techniques in Attracting Students to a Community College?
INSTITUTION Prince George's Community Coll., Largo, MD. Office of Coll. Relations and Publications.
PUB DATE 10 Jul 85
NOTE 87p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Age; Community Colleges; Information Dissemination; Institutional Advancement; Literature Reviews; Marketing; *Student Recruitment; Two Year Colleges; *Two Year College Students

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted at Prince George's Community College (PGCC) to investigate the relationship between the age of the audience and the effectiveness of marketing techniques in attracting students to the college. The study focused on how and why community colleges market themselves, and why some techniques were more effective than others for targeting specific age groups. The study involved a review of the literature supporting and opposing the use of marketing strategies by postsecondary institutions; and interviews with 10 students, two from each of five age cohorts: under 20, 20-24, 25-29, 30-39, and 40 and over. The interviews investigated how students heard about PGCC, why students chose PGCC, the impressions they had of the college before enrolling and while enrolled, the publications that were familiar to students, and students' assessment of these publications. The study revealed only minor differences among the age cohorts. Recommendations for improving PGCC's marketing efforts and publications are included in the study report, along with a literature review and bibliography. (EJV)

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What is the Relationship Between the Age of the Audience and the Effectiveness of Marketing Techniques in Attracting Students to a Community College?

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and Publications
July 10, 1985

JC 850 569

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What is the Relationship Between the Age of the Audience And the Effectiveness of Marketing Techniques In Attracting Students to a Community College?

Statement of the Problem

This paper has investigated the question, "What is the relationship between the age of the audience and the effectiveness of marketing techniques in attracting students to a community college?" To adequately discuss this question, other areas of concern needed to be examined. This included investigating how community colleges market themselves and why they market themselves, as well as whether some techniques are more effective than others for targeting audiences in specific age groups.

Historically, postsecondary institutions have been concerned with marketing, although the word, "marketing," and other marketing terminology only recently came into use in association with these institutions. In the past, colleges and universities have referred to this as "attracting" students, instead of marketing.

Since community colleges are concerned with marketing, finding practical answers to the question posed above would be most helpful to them, particularly today, with declining enrollments and resources. The first step is to define marketing. Ihlanfeldt (1980) defined marketing in the following way:

> Marketing is a methodology that permits decision makers in any organization to think systematically and sequentially about the mission of the organization, the services or products it offers, the

markets it currently serves, and the extent to which these same markets and possibly new ones may demand its products or services in the future. (p. 13)

With this basic definition in hand, after an examination of the question outlined above, the final step taken to address this problem has been a qualitative survey involving a community college. Basically, this survey has involved identifying various marketing techniques employed by the College in its recruitment efforts and determining whether the effectiveness of these techniques has been affected by the age of audience approached.

Finally, an analysis of the data has been accomplished, along with recommendations and conclusions, which are elaborated in this paper.

Usefulness of the Study

There are two major reasons why marketing is important to community colleges: declining enrollments and fiscal difficulties. Thus, an understanding of marketing techniques and an evaluation of their effectiveness is of particular importance to these institutions. The following has detailed the problems with declining enrollments and fiscal difficulties now facing community colleges.

Declining enrollments. Many community colleges are suffering from a reduction in enrollment. According to Breneman (1983), "The traditional college-age population will decline in number between now and the mid-1990s by roughly 25 percent" (p. 14). The number of traditional college-age students can be accurately predicted by looking at the number of 18-year-olds for each of the next 18 years. The peak year for

this age group was 1979. Between 1979 and 1994, the decline in this age group will occur. William R. McConnell of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education made projections for 18-year-olds for each of the 50 states for this time period. These projections take into account differences in state birth rates and migration patterns among the states. The Northeast and Northcentral regions will be the hardest hit with declines in enrollments of 40% and 32%, respectively. At the same time, the Western and Southeast-Southcentral regions will show declines of 16% and 13%. This is important, since most colleges, especially community colleges, draw many of their enrollments from their own state and/or region (Breneman, 1983, p. 15).

During this time, there "will be the shift from a sellers' to a buyers' market." This will mean "that the competition among colleges will get much stiffer" (Breneman, 1983, p. 15). Therefore, community colleges must look to other groups for enrollment. Marketing specialists refer to this as "targeting specific audiences."

According to Carol Frances (1980), some of these target groups should include low- and middle-income students, minority youths, adults, women aged 20 to 34, and men aged 35 to 64 (pp. 42, 43). Today, the most common group that colleges look to for increases in enrollment are women aged 25 to 34, because this group showed a 187% increase in enrollment between 1970 and 1978 (Breneman, 1983, p. 17).

As can be seen from this discussion, with declining enrollments associated with the decline in the number of traditional-age college students, postsecondary institutions increasingly will be using

marketing techniques to seek out other population groups as possible enrollees.

Fiscal difficulties. Increasingly, community colleges will be facing fiscal difficulties due to declining enrollments; increases in part-time students, who generate less credit dollars, yet require services equal to those provided to their full-time counterparts; and decreases in federal funding for grants, scholarships, and loans. To offset these difficulties, community colleges will be using marketing as one of their tactics.

As mentioned above, the forecast from now until the mid-1990s is that enrollments will decline due in large part to the decline in the number of traditional-aged college students. This group of students make up the bulk of full-time students and, of course, full-time students generate more credit hours.

At the same time that there has been a decline in the number of full-time students, there has been an increase in the number of part-time students. The difficulty has been that it takes several part-time students to equal one Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) student (Breneman, 1983, p. 17). Essentially, it costs an institution more resources when dealing with part-time students, because they require the same services and facilities, yet generate less credit dollars. An example would be the following scenario. It takes three part-time students to equal one full-time student. That means three people, instead of one, use the following services: admissions, registration, academic counseling, career counseling, health center, library, and

student publications. The same is true of using the following facilities: classrooms, laboratories, study areas, and parking. The use of facilities and services has tripled, yet the amount of money generated has stayed the same.

Additionally, there have been decreases in federal funding for such items as grants, scholarships, and loans. This has been clearly evident in the numerous articles that have appeared in the newspaper of higher education, The Chronicle of Higher Education, concerning the cutbacks in federal aid to education. For example, in the February 20, 1985, edition, an article by Engelgau reported, "William J. Bennett, at his first press conference as Secretary of Education, strongly endorsed President Reagan's plan to cut federal spending on student-aid programs." In the same article was information about David Stockman's (Director of the Office of Management and Budget) testimony before the House Appropriations Committee, "We can no longer afford to subsidize colleges in the guise of helping middle- and upper-income students finance high-cost educations" (p. 17).

These fiscal difficulties have been and will continue to force postsecondary institutions to reach out to other potential students. Again, this will mean using various marketing techniques such as targeting specific audiences.

Other reasons for the usefulness of this study. Although most marketing experts have written about the need to use effective marketing techniques, very few of the authors examined mentioned any studies that have been performed in this area to ascertain the most effective

marketing techniques. For example, Guillermo and Murray (1979) stated, "Previous research concerning recruitment methods in community colleges is limited." These authors believed that their research was the first of its kind to be conducted in the Mid-South, "Consequently, it was determined that the primary source of data must come from an original survey instrument" (p. 18).

A qualitative survey has been performed to evaluate this problem, using an original survey instrument for the reasons discussed by Guillermo and Murray (1979). Some marketing techniques employed by Prince George's Community College in its recruitment effort have been explored to determine whether the effectiveness of a marketing technique is affected by the age of audience approached.

Historically, Prince George's Community College has shown increases in enrollment just about each year it has been in operation since 1958. Except for a short period in the late 1970s, it was felt by the administration that there was no great need for a marketing effort. However, in the early 1980s, this began to change as enrollments, as well as funding from the state and local governments, started to level off.

In 1983, there was a dramatic decrease in enrollments of approximately 13%. This led to a call for an intensified marketing effort; however, with declining resources, and little marketing experience, there was a real need to identify those marketing techniques that were the most effective, so that the administration would have the necessary information from which to make decisions concerning the

allocation of scarce marketing resources. In 1984, there was another enrollment decline; this time, a little less at approximately 10% down from the previous year.

During the Fall, 1984, semester, a random sample quantitative survey was administered to investigate the effectiveness of the marketing tools being used by the College. Just under 900 credit students, out of a credit student population of 13,000 students, were surveyed. While this survey was useful, it only gave numbers and percentages, not an in-depth look at how students viewed the various marketing techniques used by the College. In addition, during Spring, 1985, registration, all credit students who registered were given a College Activities quantitative survey, which included some questions concerning marketing techniques. Again, this survey only gave numbers and percentages of students responding to the various questions. Therefore, the present qualitative study was performed to further delve into this question. The results of the present study will give the College more in-depth information that, when combined with the other surveys, will serve as a basis for making decisions in both the short-and long-term planning processes.

Literature Review

As previously stated, most of the authors studied did not report on any research that has been conducted, which has specifically investigated the question of the most effective marketing techniques, for nonprofit organizations in the broad sense, and community colleges in particular. However, most of these same marketing authors have discussed the importance of ensuring that marketing techniques are

effective. These authors form two camps in the discussion of marketing for postsecondary institutions: those who believe it is necessary for the survival of these institutions, and those who feel that it is not and/or that it is unethical. Additionally, some authors discussed the opposing point of view, even though they favored marketing. The following has outlined these points of view, as well as some of the important elements of marketing including surveys, strategies and tactics, promotional plans, marketing techniques, marketing plans, and target audiences.

Historical overview. According to Kotler (1972), "Universities and scholars have long been conscious of the need to market their product." He discussed the fact that the Greek Sophists displayed "the value of their wares" by giving exhibitions (p. 874). In this country, postsecondary institutions long have been marketing their services.

Beginning with the founding of Harvard College in 1636, higher education in this country has been marketing its services, although it has not always been referred to as such. For instance, in an 1850 report to the Brown University Corporation by its president, Francis Wayland stated (Ihlanfeldt, 1980):

> Our colleges are not filled because we do not furnish the education desired by the people....We have produced an article for which the demand is diminishing. We sell it at less than cost, and the deficiency is made up by charity. We give it away, and still the demand diminishes. Is it not time to inquire whether we cannot

> furnish an article for which the demand will be, at least, somewhat more remunerative? (p. 1)

Although there was a need to market postsecondary institutions, with the advent of the modern university in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, it seemed as if things got out of hand and a stigma was attached to the selling and marketing of educational services. The attachment of this stigma may have stemmed from the chaotic conditions that prevailed during this time period, when colleges and the new universities were bending over backwards to recruit new students. Bledstein (1978) discussed the situation during this period:

> In the early years of the twentieth century, Thorstein Veblen scorned this group [college administrators] as "captains of erudition," business-minded predators who corrupt the scholarly mission of a real university by packaging education in salable units, weighing scholarship in bulk and market-value, promoting the growth of a corps of bureaucratic functionaries, treating faculty as hired hands, firing controversial teachers, raiding other institutions, measuring a university by the size of its bank statements, and selling higher learning to the public by paying obeisance to the rule that the consumer always knows best. (p. 278)

This was a time when modern public relations/marketing was instituted. However, through the years, as postsecondary institutions diversified, their enrollments continued to climb, so there was no systematic approach to marketing, since there were more students than

American universities and colleges could accommodate (Harper, 1977, p. 163, 164).

However, beginning in the late 1960s and into the 1970s, predictions were being made concerning the declining numbers of traditional-aged college students; a trend that would continue into the 1990s. It was at this time that modern marketing began to be thought of as "a valid function for nonbusiness organizations" (Kotler, 1979, p. 38). According to Kotler:

> Of all the classic business functions, marketing has been the last to arrive on the nonprofit scene....As long as institutions operated in a sellers' market--as colleges and hospitals did throughout the 1960s--marketing was ignored, but as customers and/or resources grew scarce the word marketing was heard with increasing frequency, and organizations suddenly discovered marketing or reasonable facsimiles thereof. (p. 38)

Community colleges entered the scene while the four-year colleges were overflowing with students. This was because the community college positioned itself as an alternative to four-year institutions. "They were 'granted' the segments of the student market that the oversupply of students allowed them to serve." This included the poor, less qualified, local, career and vocationally oriented, non-traditional, and minority (Johnson, 1979, p. 28). However, as the traditional student population began to decline, the forces of supply and demand took over, with the four-year institutions beginning to encroach on the marketing segment that had been relegated to the community colleges. In response,

the community colleges were forced to pursue new markets and to develop marketing strategies. Basically, this has been the position in which community colleges find themselves today.

Definition of marketing. Marketing, as it relates to postsecondary institutions, must be defined before any further discussion can proceed:

> Marketing is the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchange of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. It relies heavily on designing the organization's offerings in terms of the target market's needs and desires, and on using effective pricing, communication, and distribution to inform, motivate, and serve the markets. (Kotler, 1982, p. 6)

Most of the marketing authors studied (Bryant, 1982; Ihlanfeldt, 1980; Johnson, 1982; Johnson, 1979; Keim, 1979; Kotler, 1982; Kotler, 1972; Kotler & Goldgehn, 1981; Richardson & Doucette, 1981; Topor, 1983; Wattenbarger, 1981) agreed that nonprofit organizations, including community colleges, need to develop a systematic approach to their marketing efforts. This would include segmenting the population into target markets, directing communication efforts, and designing programs or producing products to meet the needs of the various audiences.

Kotler and Goldgehn (1981) defined marketing as it relates to community colleges, "Marketing is the means by which a community college can define its existence and potential markets, identify the market's

needs, respond with appropriate programs and services, and position itself favorably" (p. 5). They further defined marketing as an eight-step process: 1) define the mission; 2) identify the publics and markets; 3) research the market; 4) segment the market; 5) choose specific target markets; 6) determine the market position; 7) formulate the marketing mix of product, price, place and promotion; and 8) implement and control marketing plans (pp. 7-11). However, they have neglected one important step, the evaluation of the various marketing techniques to determine which is the most effective for a particular audience, which is the purpose of this study.

With this brief definition of marketing, it is now possible to examine those who oppose marketing, as well as those who endorse it for postsecondary institutions.

Opposition to marketing postsecondary institutions. Of all of the marketing authors examined, only two (Palinchak, 1973; Richardson & Doucette, 1981) were opposed to marketing. Others (Gollattscheck, 1981; Harper, 1977; Johnson, 1979; Kotler, 1982; Kotler, 1979; Kotler, 1972; Leach, 1978; Myran & Ralph, 1981; Wattenbarger, 1981), while favoring the marketing of nonprofit institutions, did mention the negative aspects of such marketing and the pitfalls that may accompany an unsystematic approach to this marketing.

One reason given for the negative attitude toward the marketing of community colleges is that they often present an image of "being all things to all people," which they cannot possibly do, because of lack of resources. It is charged that this could be construed as false

advertising by the constituencies of these organizations (Myran & Ralph, p. 107).

Critics of marketing nonprofit institutions charged that these efforts may change the organizations in ways that are unexpected or undesirable (Gollattscheck, 1981; Johnson, 1979; Myran & Ralph, 1981; Richardson & Doucette, 1981; Wattenbarger, 1981). "Their predictions range from the deterioration of higher education, because educational objectives are replaced with those of business...to governmental intervention." In addition, the lack of adequate planning may turn a positive change into a negative one, as resistance builds from faculty and staff (Gollattscheck, p. 100).

Further, it has been charged that institutions with limited resources must give up something to have a comprehensive marketing plan. Without adequate planning, "Statements about the benefits of marketing are often made without adequate recognition of the extent to which it competes with other administrative and teaching duties" (Richardson & Doucette, 1981, p. 14).

Another problem of marketing cited by its critics is that the wider diversity of clients that are attracted to the organization through the marketing efforts may cause more problems than originally anticipated (Gollattscheck, 1981; Kotler, 1979; Myran & Ralph, 1981). For example, colleges and universities may attract "the wrong student to the college—students who drop out when they discover they don't have the qualifications to do the work or that the college is not what it was advertised to be" (Kotler, p. 39). In addition, some authors claimed

that, "It is quite possible that existing programs will not be adequate to serve the needs of the new student and that providing the required level of service will actually be a drain on the college's financial resources" (Myran & Ralph, p. 108).

Additionally, some of these authors looked at the problems that may develop due to the attitude on the part of some administrators, faculty, and staff concerning whether marketing is an appropriate activity for an educational institution (Gollattscheck, 1981; Johnson, 1979; Kotler, 1982; Kotler, 1979; Leach, 1978; Richardson & Doucette, 1981; Wattenbarger, 1981). For example, Kotler (1979) stated that some college administrators felt that it was "unprofessional" to "sell" their colleges and that marketing was nothing more than aggressive promotion without "improvement in competitive position, teaching quality, or student services." In addition, he claimed that some faculty regard aggressive promotion as "offensive" (pp. 38, 39). Further, some people view marketing as "hucksterism," with the attitude that the current product is what the student wants, now aggressively sell it. Or, that selling education is "unethical" (Leach, p. 20). Others have pointed out that without an impending crisis, it is almost impossible to get the needed support of the faculty (Richardson & Doucette, p. 15).

Another constituency of colleges and universities is the student body. One of the criticisms of the marketing effort is that students may be against marketing for a variety of reasons including the feeling that it is unethical and that they don't like the changes to the

institution that are incorporated due to the marketing effort (Gollattscheck, 1981; Myran & Ralph, 1981). "Those students who have been the primary focus of the institution may resent not only the new students themselves but also the changes in the institution that have occurred because of the new students" (Gollattscheck, pp. 101, 102).

Recently, ethical questions concerning the marketing of postsecondary institutions again have come to the surface as these institutions have become even more competitive for the student dollar and must develop creative strategies to attract students, maintain enrollments, and increase visibility to remain viable. The ethical questions have been concerned with the mission of an academic institution, including the perception of decreasing academic standards and educational quality to maintain enrollments. For example, Green (1985) questioned whether postsecondary institutions are more interested in targeting specific groups because of "dwindling enrollment and diminishing financial resources rather than on the welfare of the students?" (p. 19).

Critics of marketing postsecondary institutions also questioned the validity of surveys, which are an integral part of any comprehensive marketing effort. They claimed that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to determine whether the surveys accurately forecast the present and future needs of the institution. Others pointed out that postsecondary institutions might not have the time and money to support adequate needs assessments or that conflicts may arise due to inadequate resources to implement the survey findings (Harper, 1977; Johnson, 1979;

Richardson & Doucette, 1981). For example, Harper quoted John H. Krafft, college relations director at Delta College in Michigan, "This is murky turf. My suspicion is that all of the impacts [marketing techniques], media and personal, on a particular individual probably create an admission motivation which may or may not turn into the real thing" (p. 93). Additionally, Richardson and Doucette pointed out that:

> Marketing strategies that emphasize one activity must do so at the expense of other activities; similarly, marketing strategies that seek to serve new clients and to add new activities without corresponding reductions in existing activities run the risk of diluting the quality of the college's overall efforts. (p. 18)

Support for marketing postsecondary institutions. The majority of authors who discussed the marketing of postsecondary institutions discussed it in a positive way. In these dissertations, they emphasized the marketing plan, along with a promotional plan including strategies and tactics, the need for surveys, and the need to analyze marketing techniques.

For instance, looking at higher education, Gollattscheck (1981) claimed that, "For marketing to be effective, it must be an integral part of the college's long-range plan. The mission statement of the college and each goal and objective should be examined for its marketing requirements" (p. 103).

In addition, these marketers called for a continual marketing plan, one that is annually updated to enable the marketing effort to be timely and effective (Johnson, 1979; Kotler, 1982; Topor, 1983). This

continuing marketing plan must create "a 'success cycle.' This cycle means seeking *new* student clients while continuing to serve current students" (Johnson, p. 30).

According to most of the authors studied, a major part of any marketing plan is the promotional plan: getting the information to the various audiences of the organization. This would include both an internal and an external promotional effort. The internal effort addresses the concerns of the institution's constituencies related to the changing climate of the organization. Without accurate and timely information, these constituencies may be opposed to any marketing effort and their opposition may cause the plan to fail. The external effort, of course, is aimed at the needs and concerns of the community, as well as the future markets for the organization's products and services (Bryant, 1982; Crawford, 1977; Harper, 1982; Harper, 1977; Ihlanfeldt, 1980; Johnson, 1979; Keim, 1981; Kotler, 1982; Kotler, 1972; Smith, 1981). Expanding upon this, Bryant stated:

> The promotional plan is more than advertising. It should be a comprehensive communication program with a target audience, including a careful analysis of all media opportunities—newspaper, radio and television, direct mail (tabloid, special mailings, posters, flyers, and so on), and exhibits and displays (in department stores and malls). Packaging promotion properly to maximize impact is important. (p. 38)

In his discussion of the promotional efforts of community colleges, Harper (1977) stated that the public relations office must work with

other offices in the recruitment effort and that the promotional program should stress:

> (1) The educational strengths of the institution, (2) the good life and side benefits the college offers, (3) the kind of personal and human relationships that can be developed and sustained, and (4) the job rewards that will come from the college experience. (pp. 165, 166)

Most of the marketing authors studied mentioned various marketing tactics and strategies that are essential to any marketing plan. These included targeting specific audiences and then developing specific promotional pieces that addressed their specific needs and speak their language; creating a positive image of the organization, which is enhanced by a specific logo and theme; using specific media to get specific messages to specific target markets; and the use of internal and external surveys to better understand the current and future markets, as well as the community's perception of the institution (Bryant, 1982; Coffee & Miller, 1980; Crawford, 1977; Harper, 1977; Ihlanfeldt, 1980; Ihlanfeldt, 1975; Johnson, 1979; Keim, 1981; Kotler, 1982; Kotler, 1972; Leach, 1978; Volkman, 1977).

For instance, in the area of targeting specific audiences, these authors emphasized that the "shotgun" approach must be avoided. They claimed that arbitrarily sending out brochures and buying ads is not efficient and certainly not cost-effective. The best method is to have an on-going marketing plan that targets specific audiences with messages

that addressed their specific wants and needs. In their discussion of community colleges, Coffee and Miller (1980) stated:

> Many community colleges have been taking a hit and miss approach to marketing as opposed to a systematic, planned approach. Often colleges structure their marketing efforts to reach all audiences....This is not an effective approach to marketing. [Identify target markets,] then marketing activities must be structured to reach those specific audiences. (p. 12)

However, as Harper (1977) pointed out:

> Certainly, there will be times when the message should be made loud and clear to everybody as the college reaches out for total support, but on some smaller issues or in advancing a particular curriculum or program, it will be more appropriate to concentrate on a specific audience. Not only will such a flexible approach be more effective in terms of the public relations objective, it will also result in budgetary savings and savings in staff time and energy. (pp. 130, 131)

As previously discussed, the authors examined also asserted that surveys are a central element in any marketing effort. These surveys may be used to segment the various audiences; ascertain the institution's image in the community, as well as within the organization, itself; and determine which are the most effective marketing strategies for the organization to use. They also discussed the various types of surveys such as mail, telephone, and interview, and how certain surveys are better in certain situations (Bryant, 1982;

Ciervo, 1977; Clarkson, 1980; Francis, Frey, & Harty, 1979; Harper, 1982; Harper, 1977; Ihlanfeldt, 1980; Keim, 1979; Kotler, 1982; Struggs, 1981; Wattenbarger, 1981).

For example, Clarkson (1980) stated, "Each aspect of the institutional image should be discussed." This would include both strong and weak points. Also, surveys should discover what each constituency group has perceived as the "public desires." He maintained that questions should be asked of all groups including legislators, community leaders, representatives of business and industry, public school administrators and teachers, alumni and currently enrolled students. Further, Clarkson maintained that other questions must be asked concerning the target markets including, "How they can best be reached? Does each group have particular media viewing or reading habits? Through what medium can information be made most interesting and available to them?" (pp. 34, 35).

Finally, many of the marketers studied discussed the necessity of analyzing the various marketing strategies to determine the most effective strategy for the institution as a whole, and for each target market. In addition, they pointed out that increased enrollment does not necessarily mean that a particular marketing tactic worked, although it may have contributed to the increased enrollment. They stated that not only is increased enrollment important, but also the community's perceptions of the organization. Thus, it is of major importance to analyze the various marketing tactics through a variety of measurements including increased enrollments and surveys (Bryant, 1982;

Gollattscheck, 1981; Guillermo & Murray, 1979; Harper, 1982; Ihlanfeldt, 1980; Johnson, 1979; Kotler, 1982; Kotler, 1979; Kotler, 1972; Leach, 1978; Myran & Ralph, 1981; Topor, 1983; Wattenbarger, 1981).

For instance, Topor (1983) looked at the marketing strategy of using a variety of publications for promoting a postsecondary institution. He felt that the "outreach" materials needed to be examined. These materials included news releases, publications, newspaper advertisements, television spots, slide shows, catalogs, and viewbooks. He stated:

> Prepare an audit of these outreach materials....What ideas are they selling? What message does each deliver? Are the materials coordinated? Do they look like they came from the same place? Are they properly identified? Does the name of your institution appear on each? Does the copy suggest a common parent organization? Are these pieces uncoordinated? Does each institutional component represent itself separately at the expense of the parent institution? (p. 8)

Additionally, finding the research concerning the evaluation of marketing techniques in community colleges to be very limited, Guillermo and Murray (1979) conducted their own research by using an original survey instrument. They were concerned with evaluating the effectiveness of the current recruiting methods and determining which methods were the most effective. To do this, they asked currently enrolled students how they heard about the college. Their results showed that:

> Among the three most effective tools of recruitment used by East Arkansas Community College...are the college catalog, newspaper publicity and brochures. "Word of mouth" from friends such as alumni, students and the community and publicity materials in newspapers, including advertising, were found to be the best sources of information about the college. (pp. 17, 18)

Summary. This literature review has revealed that there are very few critics of marketing of postsecondary institutions. Of those critics, the majority are concerned with the negative impact of an unprepared marketing plan, as well as the ethical question of educational marketing.

Most of the authors studied favored the marketing of postsecondary institutions. They discussed a series of elements that, together, produce a coordinated, systematic, and effective marketing plan. One of the elements is the evaluation of the marketing techniques to determine their effectiveness. However, as it has been pointed out, there is very little research in this area. The problem that this paper addresses is determining the relationship between the age of the audience and the effectiveness of marketing techniques in attracting students to a community college. As this literature review has amply demonstrated, there is inadequate research in this area. Only one study came close to this problem (Guillermo & Murray, 1979), but it only found the type of marketing technique that was effective for the entire college, not for specific audiences.

Methodology

This qualitative study used two quantitative studies as a basis for the types of questions that were asked. Some of the results of all three studies were compared, looking for similarities and differences from which to make an analysis of the marketing techniques employed by Prince George's Community College (PGCC). Additionally, some of the questions were formed in response to Grunig's (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) situational theory of publics, Cross' (1983) information concerning motivational theory, and recent articles against educational marketing. The results of the instrument will be used in an attempt to answer the question, "What is the relationship between the age of the audience and the effectiveness of marketing techniques in attracting students to a community college?" Below, is a brief description of the two quantitative studies, as well as a discussion of the arguments of Grunig and Cross.

Quantitative studies. During the Fall, 1984, semester, a student questionnaire was given to a random sample of credit students at Prince George's Community College. The sample was picked from a list of classes, with every twentieth class being chosen. Additionally, these classes nearly represented the correct proportion of day, evening, and weekend classes, as well as those classes taught on the Largo campus and those at the College's extension centers located throughout Prince George's County. The questionnaires were distributed to the appropriate associate dean, who then distributed them to the instructors of the chosen classes. Finally, the students in those classes were given the

questionnaires; however, they were not required to answer them. Therefore, although there was a large return (almost 69%), it was not 100%. Even though all of the questionnaires were not returned, those that were still closely matched the correct percentage of day, evening, weekend, Largo campus, and extension center students.

In addition to the questionnaire described above, during Spring, 1985, credit registration, a few of the questions that were on the original questionnaire were added to an instrument administered during registration. This questionnaire was part of the registration form; thus, there was close to a 100% return (approximately 97%). Again, this was a quantitative instrument.

The results of both of these instruments were calculated according to the percent of responses out of the total responding. For instance, if 50% of the respondents answered question one by stating that the number one way in which they heard about the College was through a mailing to the home, it was assumed that the same would be true of the student population as a whole.

Further, the second instrument employed during the Spring, 1985, registration, went one step further with the data. In addition to investigating percentages of the total responses, the responses were broken down into six age cohorts: under 20, 20-24, 25-29, 30-39, 40-59, and 60 and over. However, it was ascertained that the differences between the last two age cohorts, 40-59 and 60 and over were negligible. Thus, for the purposes of the current study, these two age cohorts were combined, forming the 40 and over age cohort.

Since percentages do not tell the whole story, and may even be misleading, it was proposed that a qualitative study be performed to delve more deeply into the questions.

Grunig's situational theory. Grunig (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) has developed a situational theory of public relations. Basically, the theory stated that the communication behaviors of publics are best understood by how the members of publics perceive different situations. In his model, there are three major independent variables: problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement; and two dependent variables: information seeking and information processing (pp. 148, 149).

In problem recognition, Grunig (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) stated that "People do not stop to think about a situation unless they perceive that something needs to be done to improve the situation" (p. 149). In the case of Prince George's Community College, nonstudents may not be interested in any of the College's marketing tools, unless they perceived their situation as one in which they needed to take college courses. To further develop this idea, Grunig used two dependent variables. He defined the dependent variable, information seeking, as "active communication behavior." He stated, "Actively communicating members of publics look for information and try to understand it when they obtain the information" (p. 149). Grunig defined the dependent variable, information processing, as "passive communication behavior." He stated, "Passively communicating members of a public will not look for information, but they will often process information that comes to

them randomly—that is, without any effort on their part" (p. 149). Grunig maintained that people who recognize a problem, such as need for a college education, will be more likely to seek information about the problem. In this case, they will be more inclined to seek and accept information from the College.

Another independent variable in Grunig's (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) theory is constraint recognition. He defined this variable as "The extent to which people perceive that there are constraints--or obstacles--in a situation that limit their freedom to plan their own behavior" (p. 151). In the case of a community college, some of these constraints might include cost, location, times, and services. Finally, the third independent variable is level of involvement. Grunig defined this variable as "the extent to which they [people] connect themselves with the situation" (p. 152). According to Grunig, when people see themselves involved in a situation, they are likely to actively seek information about the situation (p. 152). Thus, if people believe that they need a college education, they are involved in the situation and will seek information about the courses and services offered by the College.

Cross and motivational theory. Cross (1983) discussed motivational theory and how that affected a person's desire for education. In her discussion of the relationship of socioeconomic status and participation in adult education, Cross discussed the theory of Harry Miller. She stated:

> Miller's (1967) social class theory built on the needs hierarchy of Maslow (1954) and the force-field analysis of Lewin (1947), to explain not only why people participate but also why there are large differences between social classes in what they hope to attain from participation. (p. 112)

In her discussion of the needs hierarchy, Cross stated:

> Applied to adult education, the needs hierarchy would predict that members of the lower social classes will be interested primarily in education that meets survival needs, mostly job training and adult basic education, while the upper social classes will have fulfilled those needs and will seek education that leads to achievement and self-realization. (p. 112)

Further, Cross maintained that if people were not motivated to get an education, they would allow barriers to stand in their way. She classified these barriers under three headings: situational, institutional, and dispositional. According to Cross:

> Situational barriers are those arising from one's situation in life at a given time...Lack of time due to home and job responsibilities ...Lack of money...Lack of child care...transportation... Institutional barriers consists of all those practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities—inconvenient schedules or locations...fees...courses...Dispositional barriers are those related to attitudes and self-perceptions about oneself as a learner. (p. 98)

This is very similar to Grunig's (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) situational theory in which he looks at attitudes and behaviors in different situations, such as problem recognition, which could relate to a person's motivation to seek an education. Additionally, constraint recognition would relate to the barriers described by Cross (1983).

That is, Cross (1983) and Grunig (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) essentially have stated the same thing in that people have to be motivated or recognize a problem in that they need education, before they will seek information about a college. This is illustrated in Cross' discussion of Miller:

> Miller suggests that a marketing strategy is likely to attract the lower-middle classes because positive motivational forces are already present...Marketing will do little, however, to attract the lower-lower classes. To do that, some modification of existing forces would be necessary. (pp. 114, 115)

Articles against educational marketing. As previously mentioned, articles have been written that question the ethics of educational marketing. Some have even suggested that students did not believe that education should be advertised. For example, Green (1985) stated that "most campuses see bodies and bucks as more important than student welfare" (p. 19), in his argument against educational marketing.

This concern took on great significance when, in 1983, the Council On Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) adopted a policy statement concerning the marketing of postsecondary institutions. This policy, "Principles of Good Practice in Institutional Advertising, Student

Recruitment and Representation of Accredited Status" was adopted due to the concern expressed in the assemblies of COPA about the way in which institutions advertised accreditation. An example is that some institutions were advertising that all of their programs were accredited, when some actually came under separate programmatic accreditation.

In a recent article, Richard Alpert (1985), maintained that marketing efforts must enhance the image of the institution and accurately convey information about its mission and programs. According to him, the issue being raised was whether marketing was being used in this manner, or if it was painting a distorted picture and making promises that could not be met (pp. 7-10).

Another question posed by Green (1985) concerned whether postsecondary institutions were more interested in targeting specific groups because of "dwindling enrollment and diminshing financial resources rather than on the welfare of the students?" (p. 19).

Steps taken to conduct the research. The questions asked on the first two quantitative instruments were partly derived from Grunig's (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) situational theory and Cross' (1983) contentions about the relationship between adult learning and motivational theory. Some of the questions on these instruments were used as a basis for the questions in the qualitative study. In addition, questions concerning educational marketing and advertising in the present study were based on recent articles questioning the ethics of educational marketing. Other

demographic-type questions were asked to ascertain the type of student taking part in the study.

Looking at the results of the two quantitative studies, certain questions arose. For example, in both studies, the respondents said that the number one way in which they heard about the College was through a mailing to the home. When asked which publication interested them the most in the College, the number one response was the Class Schedule. Since the only publication that is mailed to every household in Prince George's County is the Class Schedule, it was not really clear whether these surveys received an accurate answer. Since every household receives a Schedule, it stands to reason that that would be the one with which the respondents were the most familiar; thus, that became the answer in the analysis of the questionnaires. It then becomes reasonable to ask, "Was that a true response?"

Further, two important questions received a high "other" answer. The first question asked, "Who interested you in attending PGCC?" "Other" received a 19.9% response. For the second question, "Which of the following items interested you the most in attending PGCC?" the response for "Other" was 13.7% Again, this raised questions not answered by the surveys, "What was 'Other'?"

With this in mind, a basic set of questions (Figure 1) were constructed for the interview process. The answers to some of these questions were compared to the results of the two quantitative surveys for the same types of questions. It must be emphasized that the purpose of this procedure was not to validate, but to compare, looking for

Figure 1. Questions for qualitative study of marketing at Prince George's Community College, June, 1985.

1. Are you a credit student at PGCC?
2. How old are you?
3. Are you a part-time or full-time student?
4. When do you attend classes? Where do you attend classes?
5. What program are you in? Transfer? Career?
6. How long have you been attending the College?
7. Did you attend the College in the Fall, 1984, semester?
8. Did you take a survey like this one? (Show questionnaire from Fall.)
9. How did you first hear about PGCC?
10. Why did you choose to come to PGCC?
11. What did you think about the College before you came here?
12. What do you think about the College now?
13. What do you see that is good about the College?
14. What do you see that is bad about the College?
15. Is there any change that you would want to make at PGCC?
16. Are you familiar with some of the publications of the College? Which ones?
17. What did you think about these publications? Did they meet your needs?
18. What was good about these publications? What was bad?
19. Would you change them? How?
20. Do you watch cable TV? The College's channels?

Figure 1. Questions for qualitative study of marketing at Prince George's Community College, June, 1985 (cont.)

21. If the College wanted to communicate with you about classes, events, or any other information, what would be the best way to do this? Why?

22. Should colleges advertise their services? Why?

23. What are your future plans?

24. Please say anything else that you want to about the College, or the ways in which it gives you information about its courses and services.

similarities and differences. Further, the questions were only used as a guide during the interviews.

Since the data from one of the quantitative studies was analyzed according to different age cohorts, for comparative purposes, the people chosen for the interviews were chosen by age. In the quantitative survey, students were divided into six age cohorts: under 20, 20-24, 25-29, 30-39, 40-59, and 60 and over. As previously discussed, the differences between the last two age cohorts, 40-59 and 60 and over were negligible. Thus, for the qualitative study, these two age cohorts were combined, forming a 40 and over age cohort.

Due to the short length of time for accomplishing this study, it was decided that 10 students would be interviewed, two from each age cohort. Additionally, since it was the Summer semester, and students were not as available as they were during the Fall and Spring semesters, faculty and staff were asked to recommend students in the different age cohorts, whom they thought would cooperate. Further, only credit students were used, since only credit students received the quantitative instruments.

Appointments were set up with each of the students for personal interviews. The length of the interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 1.5 hours. At the beginning of each interview, the interviewees were given a brief explanation of the study. Basically, the interviewee was told that the purpose of the interview was to evaluate the effectiveness of the College's efforts to get information to prospective and current students, as well as to get an understanding of the students' perceptions of the College and its programs and services. The

interviewees were told that there was a list of questions, but that they were used only as a guide; that the interview, itself, was to be informal. Additionally, the interviewees were told that they could say anything they wanted, positive or negative, in response to the questions, and that they were free to bring up any subjects that they considered important to the discussion.

In addition, the interviewees were promised that their names would not be used in the study. They were asked permission to tape the interviews, and each replied in the affirmative. It should be noted that three of the interviewees felt that the interviews were a good idea. "I think this interview is important. The school needs to know what the students think, if there is something to change or not. We, the students, are the consumers," said an interviewee in the 20-24 age cohort.

Once the interviews were conducted, the tapes were transcribed, and the information coded. There were several steps involved with coding the information. First, the quotes believed to be important to the study were highlighted. Second, the highlighted quotes were studied, with key words highlighted. For example, when the interviewees were asked, "Why did you choose to come to PGCC?" key words such as "tuition," "convenience," and "quality education" were highlighted. Third, using the key words, comparisons were made between the interviewees, both within and between the different age cohorts, as well as between the qualitative and the two quantitative studies. Finally, with this information in hand, an analysis of the data was performed.

It should be noted that whenever an interviewee had something negative to say, that person was asked for suggestions concerning how to improve the situation. Those suggestions are part of the data and have been taken into consideration in the formulation of the recommendations.

Data

Demographics. It should be understood that this study does not represent a random sample of students. Further, it does not represent a direct proportion of students in different categories, as outlined below.

As previously mentioned, there were 10 interviewees, two from each of five age cohorts: under 20, 20-24, 25-29, 30-39, and 40 and over. Of these, 50% were part-time and 50% were full-time, compared to the College's total population of 74% part-time and 26% full-time. Additionally, 70% were day students and 30% attended both day and evening, compared to the College's total population of 48% day, 40% evening, and 12% day and evening. Further, 100% of those participating in the study were students at the Largo campus; whereas, 76% of the College's total population attended classes at the Largo campus and 24% at the extension centers. Finally, 80% of the students studied were in the Transfer Program (two in General studies, two in Nursing, two in Business Administration, one in Advertising, and one in Home Economics) and 20% in the Career Program (one in General Studies and one in Nursing). This compares to the total College population of 35% in the Transfer Program and 46% in the Career Program.

It must be noted that the data concerning the total College population was collected during the Spring, 1985, semester; whereas, the data for the present study was collected during the first Summer session, 1985. At the time of this study, the most recent figures on the total College population were those given above. This, and the fact that the students were not randomly selected, could account for the differences in the percentages.

Finally, the students were asked whether they had attended the College during the Fall, 1984, semester. Of thos interviewed, 80% had attended during the Fall. These interviewees were then asked if they had received the student questionnaire distributed during that semester. Only one answered in the affirmative. However, three of the students said that some of the questions were familiar to them, because they were on the questionnaire distributed during Spring, 1985, registration.

How the students first heard about the College. All of the interviewees said that they heard about the College through "word-of-mouth." Only one student (40 and over age cohort) heard about the College from a family member, while nine students heard about the College through a friend. Of this number, five (under 20, 20-24, 25-29, and 30-39 [2] age cohorts) heard about the College from friends who were attending PGCC. It should be noted that 50% of the students had lived out of Prince George's County before attending the College, while another student, who was a resident of the County, attended a private school in Montgomery County. Thus, they would not be as likely to have received information about the College from sources other than

"word-of-mouth," as would have been the case with those who resided in the County prior to attendence.

One student (25-29 age cohort) lived in Washington, D.C., before attending the College. She said that she did not receive any information about the College while in high school. "Had I heard about it sooner, I would have been here and out," she said.

Another student (under 20 age cohort), who was a resident of the County, came to the College as a concurrently enrolled student, while attending Largo Senior High School. Having graduated from high school in June, 1985, she had earned nine college credits through the program, before attending the first Summer session. She said that a friend, who was in the Concurrent Enrollment Program, told her about the College and the program. Her interest led her to attend an assembly at her high school during which an admissions representative from PGCC discussed the College, showed a slide presentation and distributed informational materials. It was at this point that she made her decision to enter the program. "I wasn't sure if I was going to come here. But the slide show showed the students and the life here, and he [admissions representative] was very friendly and helpful. That's why I decided to come here," she said. When asked whether the guidance counselors at her high school helped in her decision, she said "no," that they didn't give her any information about the College.

Why the students chose Prince George's Community College. All of the students listed more than one reason. Topping the list was "tuition" at 80%. Students who did not list "tuition" included one each

in the following age cohorts: 25-29 and 30-39. The student in the first age group listed "quality education" and "excellent programs" as her reasons for attending, while the student in the second group listed "developmental courses" and "excellent programs."

When the students responded that tuition was one of the reasons why they chose PGCC, they were asked whether they were bothered by the increases in tuition. Only two students said that they were bothered by the increases. One student (under 20 age cohort) said that he lived closer to the University of Maryland; therefore, "when tuition for full-time students gets closer to the full-time tuition at [University of] Maryland, it makes me think, 'Why not go there?' It's [University of Maryland] more convenient anyway."

The other student (40 and over age cohort) who would be disturbed by more tuition increases said that it was a hardship for her, because she was on a fixed income. "It's a little painful. It means that you have to stop something, cut down on something. If it's $1 or $100, if you don't have any extra, it's still a burden," she said.

Second on the list was "convenience" (60%). The students that did not list "convenience" were under 20 (2), 25-29, and 30-39 age cohorts.

Third on the list, "quality," was mentioned by 40% of the interviewees. This included the following age cohorts: under 20, 20-24, 25-29, and 30-39. A Nursing student (25-29 age cohort) said:

> I heard it was a very good college, with a high quality, excellent Nursing program. I was told that the rate of graduates who pass the

> boards is very high, at 90% to 95%. And, I wanted a high quality education.

In addition, an Advertising student (20-24 age cohort) said, "A friend of mine said that for my major, it is an excellent college."

Another reason (30%) given was the "programs" offered by the College. This included both students in the 25-29 age cohort and one in the 30-39 group.

There were four other reasons given, each noted by 20% of the interviewees. These reasons, "small school," "student-teacher ratio," "out of school a long time," and "give it a try," seemed to overlap. For example, one student (40 and over age cohort) said:

> My husband thought it would be something for me to get back into, since I had't been to school for several years, because I had worked. He figured I could give it a whack and if it didn't work out, then I didn't have to go. I kind of got the bug.

Later, she said, "Taking your first two years here would be better for students, so they could get an idea of what school is like, because it is a small school and you have a good student-faculty ratio." Another student (25-29 age cohort) said:

> I had a choice between [University of] Maryland and PG[CC]. I decided PG[CC], because it is smaller. I was out of school for a long time, so large groups really made me feel uncomfortable. So I didn't want any part of [University of] Maryland. It was a lot easier to come to PG[CC] and learn more from the faculty...The faculty is on more of a one-to-one type of thing with the students,

compared to, let's say [University of] Maryland where there's 500 students to one teacher.

Finally, one student in the under 20 age cohort said:

My original intentions, when I first entered high school, were not to go to PG[CC]. I was hoping to end up in a more prestigious college. But in high school, my grades were not very good...When I got out of high school, I was fed up with school, so I stayed out a year, working at a fast food restaurant...[After a year,] I realized that I would like to get back to school. But I had to take it slow, because I was not sure of what I wanted to do...I thought PG[CC] was inexpensive and a good place to get back on track and start again, so I decided to give it a try.

Other reasons given were: "family feeling" and "safety." An interviewee (40 and over age cohort) said, "You have a family feeling here, so it's better than going to a university." This same person said that another reason why she chose PGCC was "the safety of the campus."

What the interviewees thought about the College before they attended. Each interviewee gave a different reason, except for two (under 20 and 20-24 age cohorts), who said that they had no opinion about the College prior to enrolling. An interviewee (40 and over age cohort) said, "Well, I was confused...I didn't have much information on it. I didn't know what to expect, as I hadn't had any college and I was scared to death." Another student (25-29 age cohort) said, "I had no idea, until I actually went on campus and looked around and saw what it was like."

A surprising answer came from a student in the 30-39 age cohort. She said, "It seemed like it would be hard to break into for anyone who was not white. There's a whole lot of white folks and a handful of black folks." This was surprising, since the College has a minority enrollment of approximately 40%. In contrast, another student in the same program of study, who also is black, said, "It's everything I thought it would be, it's just beautiful."

In addition, a student in the 25-29 age cohort said, "I expected it to be a very small college. I didn't expect the teachers to be of such high quality." Finally, another interviewee (under 20 age cohort) said, "I had the misconception, somehow, that the University of Maryland would be better. I thought PG[CC] was the last resort for people. If you couldn't go anywhere else, you could go to 'good ol' PG.'"

What the students think about the College now. The number one answer (70%) was that the College has "excellent instruction." The interviewees who did not mention this were in the following age cohorts: 20-24 (2) and 40 and over. An interviewee (25-29 age cohort) said, "All of my teachers have been well-versed in their fields and have been very helpful." The other student in that age group rated the instructors as "excellent;" however, she said, "I expected a little more individual attention. You do get it, but not as much as I expected."

In contrast, both interviewees in the 30-39 age cohort felt that the instructors did give enough individual attention. "The teachers are wonderful, they understand and take time with you," said one. The same

is true of both interviewees in the under 20 age group. "I like the teachers, they seem to be interested in you," said one student.

Of the 10 interviewees, five said that they felt PGCC was a "quality" institution (under 20, 20-24, 25-29, and 40 and over [2]). One student (30-39 age cohort) said that the College had "high standards," which could be equated with "quality," making this the response of 60% of the students.

Another attribute of the College, as seen by 40% of the interviewees (under 20, 20-24, 30-39, and 40 and over age cohorts), was the "atmosphere" on campus. For example, a student in the under 20 age group said, "I like the atmosphere, the people, peers in class. In class, the teachers talk to you, help you, it's like you're on their same level." Another student (30-39 age cohort) said, "I love the atmosphere...I love it here and it will be sad when I leave it. It's a warm place, they treat you good."

"Good student-teacher ratio" was another positive area for the College, as seen by 20% of the interviewees (under 20 and 40 and over age cohorts). "I wish it were a four-year school. I like the student-teacher ratio and I think the school is great. I'm just sorry that I have to move on," said the 40 and over student. Praising the student-teacher ratio, the under 20 interviewee said:

> There is a good student-teacher ratio. Most of the teachers know me and recognize me and say, "Hi!" [University of] Maryland has 200 people in one section and you learn from a TV set. Teachers are important. Here, they are available and easy to find, like in high

school. They are available in their offices, waiting for you to come if you have a problem.

Other attributes mentioned, each by 10% of the interviewees, were, along with their age cohorts: "good services" (25-29), "good place to get started" (under 20), "clean campus" (under 20), and "easy to get to things" (under 20).

In his explanation of a "good place to get started," an interviewee (under 20 age cohort) said, "It's a great place to make decisions and get started. It's not a last resort, [not an] easy place for easy credit, not a joke, it's a very serious learning environment."

Of all of the responses to, "What do you think about the College now?" there was only one negative reply. An interviewee in the 40 and over age cohort complained that the College is "not accessible, unless you have a car." She said that the only way to take a bus to the College would be to "go downtown [Washington, D.C.] and take the bus from there, then you're fine."

What the interviewees see about the College that is good. In response to this question, the number one answer was "excellent instruction" at 60% (20-24 [2], 25-29, 30-39, and 40 and over [2] age cohorts). The one age cohort in which this response was not made was in the under 20 group. When asked what she meant by "excellent instructors," an interviewee (30-39 age cohort) replied, "The instructors have a positive attitude here, as far as helping students, giving then the initiative to want to keep going on."

The number two answer, at 40% (under 20, 20-24, 30-39, and 40 and over age cohorts), was "tuition." The one age cohort that did not give this answer was the 25-29 age group. When discussing tuition, a student (40 and over age cohort) said, "I came out here when it was $10 a credit hour. It was a bargain and still is a bargain." In addition, another interviewee (under 20 age cohort), who is going to College and working, said, "I think the cost is an asset. I'm able to save money towards other things and I can work less hours."

There were two responses, "convenience" (under 20, 20-24, and 25-29 age cohorts) and "programs" (under 20, 25-29, and 30-39 age cohorts), which were each listed by 30% of the interviewees. The following was mentioned about "convenience" by one student (25-29 age cohort):

> [The College] is very, very close to a lot of different activities. In fact, it's even close to a lot of high tech areas. This is a high tech area. Just up the street you have Lockheed. So that makes it very interesting, where a student can go to school and within a certain period of time, let's say two to four years, could land a job, because of the convenience of the area.

Another interviewee (under 20 age cohort) discussed "convenience." He said, "[The College] is convenient and things are connected well. A decent location right off the Beltway. No traffic problems. It takes me about 15 or 20 minutes to get here."

When discussing the College's programs, one student (25-29 age cohort) said, "The College offers a lot of courses in Community Services. It also offers the basic academic programs and certificate

programs. It gives you a lot of choices and you don't have to get a degree." Another interviewee (30-39 age cohort) mentioned the Nursing program, "I like it because you have academic experience and hands-on experience at the same time."

There were two attributes that were noted by 20% of the students: "family feeling" (under 20 and 40 and over age cohorts) and "variety of services" (under 20 and 25-29 age cohorts). For instance, concerning "family feeling," one interviewee (40 and over age cohort) said, "It's kind of like a family here, if you get into it. The people are very friendly and they're very helpful."

When asked what she saw that was good about the College, one interviewee (25-29 age cohort) said, "The services that the College offers to the students, as well as to the public. They offer services to the young, as well as the old."

Other positive features mentioned by the interviewees (10% each) were, along with their age cohorts: "good place to start" (40 and over), "class times" (25-29), "quality" (25-29), "work and go to school at PGCC" (20-24), "helped me to gain confidence" (40 and over), and "good student-teacher ratio" (under 20). The student who listed an attribute of the College as a "good place to start" said:

> I think it's a good place for people who aren't sure what their doing to start out, rather than get into a class where they're merely a number and they don't have any real rapport with the teacher.

Another student mentioned "class times" as an attribute of the College, "The time slots of the classes are important. I feel the scheduling is based around working students, which is good for me." The interviewee who stressed the importance of being able to work at the College, while also being a student there, said:

> When students work outside of the College, they generally don't get good work; they work in restaurants. When students work at the College, very often they get good jobs. This one [graphic artist intern at the College majoring in Advertising] is part of my career.

Finally, a student (40 and over age cohort) claimed that she has "gained confidence" since coming to the College:

> I'm nowhere near the same person I was three years ago. I'm still a little frightened, but I'm not so afraid that I won't take a first step to tackle it. Probably, the whole first year I wouldn't have. It took me a whole year here before I started saying, "Hey, it's OK if I stick my head out into the world"...I have gained confidence in learning.

What the students believed was bad about the College. There were two items, at 30% each, which the interviewees said was bad about the College. They were: "inaccessibility" (under 20, 30-39, and 40 and over age cohorts) and "parking" (under 20, 25-29, and 40 and over age cohorts). An interviewee (30-39 age cohort) made the following suggestions concerning the inaccessibility of the College:

> The buses run every hour on the hour. I think that they should run more often during rush hour. And, there should also be a shuttle

> for students going to the subway stations from PG[CC], to the Addison Road and Landover Stations. Sometimes, you have to wait so long and the buses don't even show up.

When asked if she would be willing to pay to take a shuttle, she said, "Sure, of course."

The need for more sports was emphasized by 20% of the interviewees; both were in the under 20 age cohort. "Sports, I love sports. We need more sports activities," said one. The other student stated that the College needs to "emphasize more sports activites."

Other areas in which the College needs improvement, each listed by 10% of the interviewees, were, along with their age cohorts: "schedule semesters to coincide with the public school year" (40 and over), "need study rooms" (40 and over), "more mix between foreign and American students" (25-29), "need courses in test taking and studying" (25-29), "Summer sessions should offer more courses" (25-29), "need smoking areas" (40 and over), and "registration" (under 20). In her discussion of the scheduling of semesters, one student said:

> I'd find it difficult, at least when my children were much younger, the way the College's semesters were scheduled, because the school year for the children and the school year for the parent is completely off kilter. And, you get a time when children are out on Easter vacation, and you're going to school. You've had your Spring break two or three weeks before they have. And, if you have small children at home, it's either a babysitter, or you find someone to watch them.

Another problem, as seen by one student, is the need for study rooms. She said:

> I think the Learning Resources Center and the Student Center is not set up for actual student use, where you have your study rooms so far from everything. When the College had the old Breezeway, the old Breezeway Lounge was much more acceptable, because you could be studying and go immediately to class. Now, you have to go across the bridge [between buildings], or you have to go elsewhere. You have to go all the way around if you're in Marlboro and if you're pressed for time, it's difficult. I would set up study lounges in the different buildings.

Another student noted the problem of the mix between foreign and American students. He said:

> There are differences between the international students and the American students. For example, you have a lot of foreign students sitting together and discussing things together and working together. It's very difficult to get a mix between the foreign and American students.

Further, a student suggested that the College needs courses in test taking and studying. She said:

> Another problem, I feel, is that the College should offer courses in test taking and studying. I know they offer an assertive training course, but they don't offer test taking. I know a lot of students have said the College should offer a basic course in test taking and studying, because both are problems for most students.

Still another problem noted by a student was the need for smoking areas. She said:

> I think it's terrible that so many young people come here and smoke. I have a lung problem. Walking down the halls, sometimes there are 30 or 40 people lining the hallway and everyone is smoking...There should be a smoking area on each floor, at the end of each hall.

Finally, one student listed registration as a problem area for the College. He said:

> Perhaps, when you get down to the last few weeks [of registration], you should move to a larger space than the hallway, like the gym or Community Rooms. Get out of the tiny, stuffy hallway. You will still have the lines, but you can control them better. People will be more comfortable. Maybe have more terminals and also have billing in this larger space.

Another problem associated with registration also was pointed out by this student:

> Those reference numbers trick me up. It's not clear in the Schedule that the main thing to have is the reference numbers. A wrong reference number can put you in the wrong class. This should be highlighted.

Publications that are familiar to the students. Each of the interviewees was shown some of the College's major publications, as well as some of the often-used minor ones, to ascertain which publications were familiar to them. First, all of the interviewees were familiar with the two major publications on which the College expends the most

resources, the Schedule of Classes (Spring and Summer, 1985) and Catalog (1983-85).

Second, the Viewbook (1984), which also is a major College publication, was familiar to 60% of the students. After examining the age cohorts, it was found that two groups (under 20 and 30-39) had a 100% "yes" response; whereas, one group (20-24) had a 100% "no" response to familiarity with the Viewbook. The other two groups (25-29 and 40 and over) were evenly split.

Third, the Student Handbook (1984-85) was the final major publication shown to the interviewees, who split, 50% "yes" and 50% "no," in response to whether they were familiar with it. Of the five age cohorts, one (40 and over) had a 100% "yes" response, while one (30-39) had a 100% "no" response. The other three groups (under 20, 20-24, and 25-29) were evenly split.

Fourth, two area brochures, one for Arts and Sciences (1984) and one for Technical and Career Education (1983) were shown to the interviewees. Only one student (20-24 age cohort) responded "yes" to being familiar with the Arts and Sciences brochure, while 40% (under 20, 20-24, 30-39, and 40 and over) responded "yes" to the Technical and Career Education brochure.

Finally, a Class Flyer was shown to the interviewees. Asked whether they were familiar with it or something like it, 40% (under 20, 25-29, 30-39, and 40 and over) responded "yes."

Critique of the College's publications. After the interviewees were shown the various publications, they were asked to critique the ones

that were familiar to them. The following outlined those responses that were given by more than one person.

First, 20% of the interviewees (25-29 and 40 and over age cohorts) said that they would like to see the name of the instructor in the Schedule of Classes. "When I first came here, you knew who your instructor was going to be. You could look him up in the Catalog to see if that was the sort of person you wanted...and see what his background was," said one student (40 and over age cohort). The other student (25-29 age cohort) said he would like to see the instructors' names in the Schedule:

> Because going to different classes without knowing a little background of the instructors, you are at somewhat of a loss until you get there. At that point, if it's very difficult to adjust to the instructor, then you'd have to try to make other arrangements.

He added that there should be information about the part-time instructors, just as there is about full-time instructors, "Just a background, what they've achieved and what their goals are. Maybe a little about their interests." He suggested distributing this information through the Catalog or a handout at registration, with the names and a short synopsis of the background of each full- and part-time instructor.

When shown a Class Flyer, 30% of the interviewees (20-24, 30-39, and 40 and over age cohorts) said that they would, or did, take a class because of a flyer, while 40% (under 20, 20-24 [2], and 30-39 age

cohorts) said they would not (30% had no opinion). An interviewee (25-29 age cohort), who did take a course because of a flyer, said:

> I took one class because I saw a flyer...the description was right there. It pertains to one particular class and gives you more of an insight, rather than going to the Catalog and having to go through a whole selection...I took a weekend class, a geology class, and I really enjoyed it a lot. And I learned a great deal as well.

In contrast, another student (30-39 age cohort) said that she would only look at a Class Flyer "if it is about one of the courses I am planning to take."

Of the six interviewees asked, all (under 20 [2], 20-24, 25-29, and 40 and over [2] age cohorts) said that they would "throw away" the Schedule of Classes, if they were not interested in PGCC or in taking courses in general. For example, one student (20-24 age cohort) said, "I might look to see what they offered, then throw it away." However, these same interviewees said that if they were interested in PGCC or in taking courses in general, they would use the Schedule of Classes. For instance, one student (under 20 age cohort) said, "If I thought that I might be interested in classes, I would keep it. Not only does it have class scheduling information, it has other important information as well."

The following are further critiques of publications, as well as suggestions for improvements, given by individuals in the different age cohorts. A student (under 20 age cohort) critiqued the Catalog, "It gave me the information that I needed and described the courses

well. It gave me enough information on the transfer of credits and things were easy to find." Concerning the Schedule of Classes, she said, "Everything was clearly defined, self-explanatory." Also, she said that she would be attracted to a publication "if it is something bright like the Viewbook. It would catch your attention; something with a student, who you would have something in common with."

The other student in the same age cohort said that he found the Catalog "interesting" and "helpful." While looking at both the 1983-85 and 1985-86 Catalogs, he said the color of the later "is much more attractive. If I was looking at a whole range of materials, I would pick things up because of the color." Concerning the Schedule of Classes, he said, "I get them at home in the mail and I also grab one on campus, to make sure I have one." He said that the Schedule should emphasize the importance of reference numbers. "I know the system, now it's a breeze. But you need to take time at first. People need to learn how to read this Schedule, how it is set up."

When asked about the Student Handbook, he said, "I refer to it a lot. It has rules and regulations for student organizations and the Finance Board. Since I'm active in student organizations, all the facts I need are there." Finally, he said that he had seen the Viewbook once, "I saw this [Viewbook] after I was already on campus. This would have been nice to see before I went here."

Both students in the 20-24 age cohort found the publications, including the Catalog, Schedule of Classes, and brochures, "helpful," "easy to understand and find things," and "interesting." One student

said that she found the phone numbers in the Catalog to be particularly useful.

An interviewee (25-29 age cohort) felt that the Student Handbook was "very informational," but that it "should be a little more formal." Also, he felt that the Viewbook was "very good." He said:

> It definitely helps out giving you a quick description of the classes and the students involved, the faculty, and the pictures really help out. It gives you a nice stimulus...it's very precise and to the point...it has all the information that's necessary.

As far as the Catalog is concerned, he said, "The Catalog gives you more information than anything else...it makes it very convenient to have everything right there at your hand." Finally, asked whether he could understand the information in the various publications, he said:

> I think the information gets down to the layman...They [students] should be able to understand this information...However, I have a concern about the foreign students. They have a very difficult time going through the Catalog...maybe have a small section [in the Catalog] just for the foreign students, or have a separate flyer for whatever nationality the student might be.

In the 30-39 age cohort, an interviewee said:

> I found the Catalog to be very thorough...I picked out the classes that I wanted and I registered for them. I didn't have any problems. I found everything very explicit...it tells you everything you need to know about graduating from PG[CC]. But if

you want to continue, they should have literature available for you to read to refer to if you want to transfer.

Concerning the Schedule of Classes, she said:

> The Summer Schedule is well set up like the Fall, but I think there should be a warning in there somewhere about taking accelerated courses...because some students really aren't aware of how fast and how intense they are. Then they get in and they drop them or fail them.

The other interviewee in the 30-39 age cohort discussed the Catalog, "It took some getting used to. At first, I didn't understand what I was looking at." After a friend explained to her how to use the Catalog, she didn't have any more problems. Concerning the Schedule of Classes, she said, "They are pretty good. Now I have no trouble finding things, but the section and reference numbers confused me when I first came here."

An interviewee in the 40 and over age cohort believes that there should be more information concerning prerequisites in both the Catalog and Schedule of Classes. For example, she said that in some departments, "the instructor reserves the right to have a student tested." She explained that when she had Biology 101, she had a problem:

> I hadn't had any biological science since I'd been in high school...They didn't have a Biology 100 at the time and I sort of took it [Biology 101], because that's what I wanted to take. The instructor explained to us in class that if you hadn't taken a

> course in so many years, that you should have the other course prior to it. So he tested us to see what we knew. It would have been nice to know that if you hadn't taken a course in so many years...you shouldn't take the course.

In addition, in both the Catalog and Schedule of Classes, she felt that "more emphasis" should be placed on information concerning testing services, such as the CGP (Comparative Guidance and Placement test). Other areas that she felt needed emphasizing were loans, scholarships, and PLAN (Prior Learning Assessment Network). Further, she felt that the students should be given a newsletter similar to Spotlight, the faculty and staff newsletter. Generally, she believes that "they're all very good publications."

Finally, the other interviewee (40 and over age cohort) critiqued the Arts and Sciences brochure:

> I like that one very much. I like the colors and the pictures. The headings are bright red, as are the first letters of each paragraph. If you wanted to read just one part, all you have to do is read the heads, then just go back and read the paragraphs.

What publications would the students look at first. When this question was asked, it became apparent that there were two answers, what the students would pick up first and what was first given to them. When the students described what publication they would pick up first, several named more than one publication, which is why the following percentages add up to more than 100%. The Catalog was named by 70% of the interviewees (under 20, 20-24 [2], 25-29 [2], 30-39, and 40 and over

age cohorts). The Viewbook was chosen by 40% of the interviewees (under 20, 20-24, 30-39, and 40 and over age cohorts). There were two publications that were each chosen by 30% of the interviewees, the Arts and Sciences brochure (under 20, 20-24, and 40 and over age cohorts) and Schedule of Classes (under 20 [2] and 20-24 age cohorts). Finally, the Student Handbook was chosen by 20% of the interviewees (20-24 and 40 and over age cohorts).

Second, some students mentioned that they were given information when they inquired about the College. This included 30% (under 20 and 20-24 [2] age cohorts) who received the Catalog and 10% each for the Viewbook (under 20 age cohort) and Schedule of Classes (20-24 age cohort).

An interviewee (40 and over age cohort) said that she would pick up the Student Handbook first, "because it's attractive. Then I would take a look at the Viewbook, because it does say, 'A Quality Investment.' And then, if I was truly interested in taking a course, I would pick up one of the Schedules." Another student (20-24 age cohort) said that although he had received the Catalog and Schedule of Classes first, he would have chosen "the Handbook and maybe the Viewbook."

Another interviewee (under 20 age cohort) said that she received a copy of the Viewbook when a representative of the College visited her high school. She said that if she had a choice, the Viewbook would be her first pick, "The Viewbook has a person on it, like a student, and you are more drawn to it." If she needed more information, she would choose the "Arts and Sciences brochure and the Schedule of Classes,

because they are more bright." The second student in this age cohort said that when he requested information on being admitted to the College, he wasn't given anything except a "little letter. I wasn't given any other information, so I picked up a Class Schedule at registration."

The best methods of communicating with the students. The number one method (90%) of communicating with the students is by mail. Only one person (25-29 age cohort) did not give this answer; instead, his first choice was cable TV. It should be pointed out that he was very involved with cable TV, working in the College's TV studio and planning to earn a degree in the communications field. However, 30% of the interviewees (under 20 [2] and 25-29 age cohorts) did mention cable TV as a means of communicating with them, which was the overall number two choice. It should be noted that at the time of this study, only 40% of the interviewees (under 20 [2], 20-24, and 25-29 age cohorts) received cable TV, and they all watched the College's channels. Thus, three out of four students chose cable TV as a means of communicating with them.

Other methods of communicating with the students, at 20% each, included radio (under 20 and 25-29 age cohorts), bulletin boards (under 20 and 25-29 age cohorts), and posters and signs (25-29 and 30-39 age cohorts). Finally, one student (25-29 age cohort) said that a good way to communicate is through ads.

Advertising. The interviewees were asked whether the College should advertise its services. There was a 100% "yes" response. Of that number, 90% said that the reason why the College should advertise is "to

let people know about its services." The other reason stated (under 20 age cohort) was "to bring in more students and improve the image of the College." When asked what is the best way to advertise, only five students responded. Of those, three (20-24, 25-29, and 40 and over age cohorts) listed television, and two (under 20 and 20-24 age cohorts) said radio.

In addition, 60% of the interviewees (20-24, 25-29, 30-39, and 40 and over [2] age cohorts) had seen the College's advertisements in the newspapers. These ads were seen in the Washington Post, Prince George's Journal, and The Owl (student newspaper). It should be noted that 20% of the interviewees (under 20 [2] age cohort) did not receive a newspaper; thus six out of eight students had seen the College's newspaper ads.

Further, none of the interviewees had heard a College advertisement on the radio. However, 30% (30-39 and 40 and over [2] age cohorts) do not listen to the radio.

Other information added by the interviewees. The interviewees were asked whether there was anything else that they wanted to add. Some repeated information previously discussed. However, one idea that stood out was that 50% (under 20, 20-24 [2], and 40 and over [2] age cohorts) felt that the College should advertise more. For example, one student (40 and over age cohort) felt that the College should "play up the fact that taking your first two years here would be better for students, so that they could get the idea of what school was like."

Another interviewee (20-24 age cohort) felt that the College should "keep on advertising." He said that the College could "make the ads more interesting by putting in information on specific programs." Finally, one student (under 20 age cohort) said, "I would advertise more on the radio. I would advertise on Q107 and 105, which are for people my age."

A further idea, which was mentioned by 30% of the interviewees (under 20, 20-24, and 25-29 age cohorts), was that the interview, itself, which was conducted for this study, "was a good idea" (as previously mentioned, see page 35).

The following are other suggestions listed by individuals, which were not previously mentioned. First, one student (40 and over age cohort) proposed that the College emphasize "information about tutoring and other services, such as babysitting services...in the Schedule," or there could be a flyer on "services available to the student." Another interviewee in this age cohort believed that "middle-aged women, displaced homemakers, should come here to see that they can enjoy the studies here. I also see other things besides studying, a sense of belonging." Further, she said the College should "put more brochures in grocery stores and hold classes in shopping centers," where it is convenient for people. Also, she suggested that the College:

> Should have a singles dance in the Community Rooms once a week...The College's students and the community would be involved; they need a place to go and dance. There would be a little drinking and you

could charge admission...This would give people exposure to the College.

Finally, a student (under 20 age cohort) said that he:

Was surprised a student was not on the Marketing Task Force. Sometimes students seem to be left out on crucial decision-making things and that's a shame, since that's what it's all about...There should be more emphasis on students...I'm not saying that students are neglected, but you can always take more student opinions and reactions.

Data Analysis.

Analysis of the data has been accomplished using three techniques. First, quantitative data, such as numbers of interviewees hearing about the College in certain ways, has been compared to data from the two quantitative studies previously mentioned. Second, qualitative data has been compared to the data and findings of the two quantitative studies. Finally, information not found in the quantitative studies has been analyzed. Any of these three may have been combined, when discussing a particular topic.

Further, as this study progressed, it became apparent that it was accomplishing more than just answering the question, "What is the relationship between the age of the audience and the effectiveness of marketing techniques in attracting students to a community college?" The students were giving their impressions of the College both before they attended and now that they are students, as well as pointing out

what they perceived to be problems of the College and their suggestions for allieviating those problems.

How the students first heard about the College. In the present study, all of the interviewees heard about the College through "word-of-mouth." This compares to 50% (Spring, 1985, quantitative study) of the total College population. Of this percentage, 30% were friends and family and 20% were high school teachers and counselors. This compares to the present study in which 100% was friends and family. In the quantitative study, friends and family were listed as the number two response, with high school teachers and counselors as number three. According to the quantitative study, the number one way in which the respondents heard about the College was through publications mailed to the home (39%). However, if the second and third choice had been combined and listed as "word-of-mouth," then it would have become the number one answer, which then positively compares to the present study.

However, the quantitative study conducted during the Fall, 1984, semester, asked this question a little differently. First, it asked "who influenced" the student to attend PGCC. The top three answers were: family members (39.6%), friends (21.6%), and other (19.9%). In the present study, this compares to friends (90%) and family members (10%). An attempt of this study had been to delve more deeply into the "other" response of the quantitative study; however, this was not accomplished, since there were only two responses given and they both corresponded to the quantitative studies. The second question asked "what influenced" the students to come to the College. Only two answers

were significant, a publication mailed to the home (63.7%) and a visit to campus (16.5%); neither of which appeared in the current study.

Further breaking this down into age groups, in one quantitative study (Spring, 1985), all of the age cohorts, except one, responded that publications mailed to the home was the number one way in which they heard about the College. The under 20 age cohort was the only one that differed, listing friends and family members as number one. This compares to the present study in which all of the age cohorts, except one, listed friends. The one, 40 and over age cohort, was evenly divided between friends and family members.

In the Fall, 1984, quantitative study, the students were asked, "If you became interested in attending the College because of a publication, which publication was it?" The number one response was the Schedule of Classes (62%); therefore, it was postulated that the number one way in which the students heard about the College was through the Schedule of Classes. Thus, it was felt that the Class Schedule must be the College's most effective marketing tool. However, at that time, it was noted that since the Schedules had been the only College publication mailed to every household in the County, that that could be the explanation for the response.

To delve more deeply into this question, the current study asked the students what publication they would pick up first and which ones they were given first. This was an attempt to see whether they would seek information (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) about the College through the Schedule of Classes; thus, demonstrating that the Schedule was indeed an

effective marketing tool. However, the number one publication that would be picked up first was the Catalog (70%), with the Viewbook (40%) second. The Schedule was tied for third with the Arts and Sciences Brochure (30%). The Catalog (30%) also was the first publication given to the students, with the Viewbook and Schedule second at 10% each.

To take this one step further, using motivational theory (Cross, 1983) and the situational theory of publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), the students were asked what they would do with the Schedule if they were not interested in the College or in taking courses. All of those who answered this question said that they would "throw it away." In contrast, if they were interested in taking a course, they would keep the Schedule and use it. Since this corresponded to both theories, the College may be wasting its money by sending out information to people who are not processing it; thus, not attracted to the College because of it.

All of the above has raised more questions. First, were the questions in both quantitative studies properly formulated? Were the answers analyzed correctly? Should there have been one category called "word-of-mouth," with subcategories such as "friends" and "family members"? Is the Schedule really an effective marketing tool, or is that response camouflaged by the fact that everyone who lives in the County has received one?

Why the students chose to come to PGCC. There were two questions asked in the current study that related to the present question in that the responses were similar. These questions asked students what they

thought about the College now and what they saw that was good about the College. The same themes seemed to run throughout, including the last question in which the students were asked to say anything that they wanted about the College. The key phrases were: "tuition;" "convenient;" "student-teacher ratio;" "family feeling" and "atmosphere;" "programs;" "quality" (including "excellent instruction" and "high standards);" and "good place to get started."

In an effort to put some kind of quantitative value on these phrases for comparative purposes, the number of times that each was mentioned was counted. In decending order, the top responses were: 1) "quality," which includes "excellent instruction," and "high standards;" 2) "tuition;" 3) "convenience;" 4) "programs;" 5) "family feeling" and "atmosphere;" 6) "good place to get started;" and 7) "student-teacher ratio." This compares to the top seven responses of the Fall, 1984, quantitative study: 1) "cost" (tuition); 2) "location" (convenience); 3) "programs;" 4) "quality;" 5) "class times;" 6) "transfer of credits" and 7) "small class size" (student-teacher ratio). Although "family feeling" and "atmosphere" and "good place to get started" did not appear in the top responses of the quantitative study, they did appear further down the list as "personal faculty attention" (number nine) and "give college a try" (number 11). In the present study, "class times" and "transfer of credits" appeared near the bottom of the list.

Examining the information further, in the present study, all of the age cohorts mentioned "tuition," "convenience," and "quality." This is significant in that as far as targeting markets according to age cohorts

is concerned, there is no difference in the emphasis of these three reasons for chosing the College. The only age cohort that did not mention "family feeling" and "atmosphere" was 25-29. There were two age cohorts that did not stipulate "student-teacher ratio" (20-24 and 30-39) and "good place to get started" (20-24 and 25-29). These differences may be significant when targeting specific populations, or they may be due to other variables such as sex, or they may be insignificant since these same responses received more than a 32% response in the Fall, 1984, quantitative study. However, they do raise questions that should be further studied.

The top four responses of both studies, although not in the same order, are the same: quality, tuition, convenience, and programs. These are the themes that are emphasized in the College's various marketing tools. Thus, if these students were motivated to go to college (Cross, 1983), then they sought information (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) about college, including information about Prince George's Community College. Since they chose the College, and they articulated the same reasons for their choice as the themes emphasized in the College's marketing tools, it could be hypothesized that these messages are effective in recruiting students.

What the interviewees thought about the College before they attended. Basically, the interviewees said that they had no real opinion about the College, because they did not have enough information from which to form an opinion. It must be remembered that 50% of the students had lived out of the County prior to attending the College.

However, many of the students felt that the College would be a quality institution, because that was what their friends had told them and that was the reason for their enrollment.

Others thought that the College would be small, the teachers would not be of such high quality, the University of Maryland would be better, and PGCC was a last resort. Although these perceptions have changed, they may be images of the College as seen by potential students. These images might be barriers to some students, keeping them from applying to PGCC. Thus, a study of how the College is perceived in the outside community or by newly admitted students, should be conducted. This would help to eliminate any attitude changes that have arisen since a student has attended the College.

What the students believed was bad about the College. All of the responses to this question had to do with peripheral issues not related to quality, instruction, and programs. They should be characterized as potential problem areas that might affect the overall marketing effort of the College, which includes retention. But, they are not related to the effectiveness of the College's marketing tools.

However, they have been noted, both here and in the "Data" section in an effort to open the discussion as to whether these perceived problems do affect the College's recruitment and retention efforts. For example, since so many people seem to hear about the College through word-of-mouth, if they are told about these perceived problems, they may decide not to attend the College. That is, these problems can become

barriers, preventing potential students from applying to the College, or preventing students from continuing their studies at the College.

There was one important problem articulated by 30% of the interviewees that is important in that it relates to "convenience," which is one of the top three reasons why students chose the College. These students discussed the College's "inaccessibility." Since they do not drive to class, they have a difficult time with bus schedules and getting to and from the College via Metro stations. Because it is such an important issue, it needs further evaluation to determine the implications it may have in affecting the decisions of potential and current students, as well as to determine effective solutions to this problem.

Publications that are familiar to the students. This section also will discuss the effectiveness of these publications as marketing tools. First, it is reasonable that all of the students were familiar with two major publications of the College: the Catalog and Schedule of Classes. These are the two publications on which the College expends the most resources. Second, every student residing in Prince George's County receives a Schedule and, students must use the Schedule when registering for courses, because they need reference and section numbers. Third, most students use the Catalog to determine, at the very least, the required courses for their program of study.

When students were shown various College publications and asked which ones they would pick up first, the Catalog was number one on the list. Taking that into consideration, along with the fact that each of

the age cohorts mentioned the Catalog, it could be construed that the Catalog is an effective marketing tool and may even be the most effective marketing tool. However, since all of the interviewees were current students at the College and had used the Catalog, the above cannot be a definitive statement. Instead, more research needs to be conducted with potential students, who had never before seen the Catalog, to fully evaluate its effectiveness.

In contrast, the Schedule of Classes, on which (this includes the three credit Schedules) more resources are expended than any other publication, was number three on the list of publications that the students would pick up first. In total mentions, it received less than half of those received by the Catalog. This conflicts with the analysis of the Fall, 1984, quantitative study (see page 64), in which it was suggested that the Class Schedules were the most effective marketing tool for the College. Further, only two age cohorts, under 20 and 20-24, said that they would pick up the Schedule first. Thus, there needs to be further evaluation of its effectiveness as a marketing tool, particularly in the 25-29, 30-39, and over 40 age cohorts, as well as its cost effectiveness. Since those three age cohorts mentioned publications mailed to the home as the number one way in which they heard about the College (Spring, 1985, quantitative study), there appears to be a potentially serious conflict.

The next publication familiar to the majority of the interviewees was the Viewbook. This has been a major marketing tool of the College, particularly in the high schools, where it is distributed by the

College's admissions representative. It's effectiveness is underscored by the fact that both students in the under 20 age cohort were familiar with it and that it was second on the list of publications that the students would pick up first. Only one age cohort (20-24) was not familiar with the Viewbook; however, this age cohort would choose the Viewbook if it had a choice. Thus, it seems to be an effective marketing tool; but, the question arises as to whether it would be more effective if it were distributed more. For example, only one student said that the Viewbook was given to her before entering the College. Another student said that he had received no informational materials before entering the College, and that if he were given a choice, he would have selected the Viewbook. Both of these students were in the under 20 age cohort.

Although only one of the interviewees was familiar with the Arts and Sciences brochure, it tied the Schedules for third on the list of publications that the students would pick up first. Thus, it has the potential of being a powerful marketing tool, if it is more widely distributed. Those age cohorts that would chose this brochure were under 20, 20-24, and 40 and over.

The interviewees who chose these publications said that they did so because they were attractive, bright, colorful, and had people on the covers and pictures of people inside. Therefore, it could be reasoned that this method of producing publications is effective in the College's marketing efforts and should be continued.

Another publication, the Student Handbook, was familiar to 50% of the interviewees. Since the Handbook is published for all of the students and contains valuable information such as the Student Code, the number of copies available, as well as the distribution, may be inadequate. Further, it was fourth on the list of those publications that the students would pick first. Although the Handbook was not produced as a marketing tool, it may have the potential to be one. At the very least, it may be useful in the retention efforts by giving students information that they need to be successful at the College.

The Technical and Career Education brochure was familiar to 40% of the interviewees; yet, no one chose it as a publication that they would pick up first. This brochure was not in color and was not printed on slick paper, which, to the students, made it less attractive when compared to the College's other publications, so they would not pick it up. Thus, it can be speculated that it was ineffective as a marketing tool and certainly not cost effective.

Finally, the Class Flyer was familiar to 40% of the interviewees. It was not familiar to those in the 20-24 age cohort. The Class Flyer was used in this study to help determine its effectiveness in recruiting students to particular classes. There was no clear-cut determination in that it was almost evenly divided, both by numbers and within age cohorts, as to the possibility of attracting students to classes. A slight edge went to the "no" response. This brings up the question of its cost-effectiveness. Currently, these flyers are produced in the

same manner as the major publications. They may be just as effective if they are produced in a less costly manner.

A final note, the only publication that the 25-29 age cohort would pick up first was the Catalog. This may imply that a specific marketing tool needs to be targeted to this group. It may be valuable to interview a focus group of this age cohort to determine whether it is necessary to target this group.

The best methods of communicating with the students. By far, the best method (90%) of communicating with the students is through the mail. Although the percentage wasn't as high (52%), this was the best method chosen by students in the Spring, 1985, quantitative study. And, it was the best method for all age cohorts in both studies. Currently, students receive information about events, as well as the Class Schedules, through the mail. In the present study, one student mentioned that she would like to receive a newsletter that would give her more information such as news concerning students, faculty, and staff. This may be used as a vehicle in the retention efforts, as well as a marketing tool in that other members of a student's household, as well as friends, also may read the newsletter.

Advertising. In response to the concern about whether colleges should advertise their services, all of the interviewees in the present study replied in the affirmative. In fact, several students said that PGCC should advertise more and gave suggestions for advertising. For this group of students, the most effective means of advertising was through newspaper ads. Additionally, the ads seen by the students

appeared in the Washington Post, Prince George's Journal, and the student newspaper, the Owl. Since the College spends most of the newspaper advertising budget on these papers, with a small fraction going to other local papers, it can be assumed that this type of advertising has been an effective marketing tool and has been cost effective.

When asked about radio ads, none of the students had heard an ad from the College. However, it should be pointed out that 30% did not listen to the radio. Although some of the remaining students listened to the stations on which the College has advertised, those were not the only stations to which the students listened. Thus, it may be that the College's efforts to advertise on the radio have not been effective. There may be several explanations for this. First, the College only advertises on two stations, with the students listening to many more. Second, when the College does advertise on radio, the budget is small, which means that it can only buy a few spots during the last two or three weeks of registration. In addition, the age cohorts that did listen to the stations on which the College advertises were 25-29 and 30-39, which means that the majority of the age cohorts did not have a chance to hear the College's radio ads. More research needs to be done in this area, because it seems as if the radio ads are not effective marketing tools as presently purchased. Also, it seems evident that if the College is to continue advertising on the radio, it needs to do so on more stations and expand the number of spots per station.

Recommendations

This study has brought out similarities and differences between it and the results of the two quantitative studies. In some instances, new questions have been created. Therefore, additional studies need to be developed and implemented. For example, another quantitative study should be conducted in the Fall, 1985, semester. Some of the questions on the previous quantitative studies need to be rewritten, as well as new ones developed, in response to the findings of this study.

Once the data has been collected, a factor analysis should be performed to ascertain whether groupings of students answered questions in certain ways. If these groups can be identified, the next step would be to form focus groups matching the characteristics of the identified groups. A qualitative study would then be performed with these groups, similar to the present study, for comparison purposes, as well as to delve more deeply into the questions. This should be a continual process, on at least an annual basis.

In addition to these studies, other questions raised in the present study need to be addressed. Some interviewees mentioned problems that they have encountered at the College. These need to be studied to ascertain whether they are the perceived problems of more than just a few students. For instance, several students said that they would like to see the names of the instructors placed in the Schedule of Classes. Working with faculty and staff, a focus group of students could be formed to critique the Schedules. In addition to the suggestion mentioned above, the members of this focus group would be asked whether

they had difficulty understanding the Schedule the first time they read it, as well as had problems with reference and section numbers, as outlined in the present study. This same thing could be accomplished with the other problem areas pointed out in the current study, such as the need for smoking lounges and study rooms, better public transportation and the feasibility of a shuttle to and from Metro stations, moving registration to a larger area and providing more computers during the last few weeks of registration, and sending out a newsletter to students.

The purpose of these focus groups would be to verify the information contained in the present study. If it appears that the needs outlined in the present study are genuine, trial projects for these areas could be initiated. Then studies should be performed to evaluate the effectiveness of these projects; in effect, a pre- and post-test would be administered to ascertain whether the proposals would become permanent procedures.

Further, the interviewees mentioned "family feeling," "atmosphere," "student-teacher ratio," "a good place to start," and "gaining confidence in learning" as attributes of the College. These themes should be emphasized on a trial basis in College publications that target specific age cohorts, which correspond to those giving the above responses. If further studies show this to be effective, they, too, should become permanent. In addition, if permission is granted, the students giving those responses should be used in testimonials about the College, which have been a part of the College's marketing tools.

Since word-of-mouth and publications mailed to the home appear to be the most frequent ways in which students hear about the College, and since the students said that the best way to communicate with them was through the mail, the College should put more emphasis in these areas. For example, the College could prepare more attractive information pieces to be sent to students, with the idea that the students will then share these attractive publications with their family and friends. This may help in the retention of students, as well as interest their family and friends in obtaining more information about the College and, eventually, to become students themselves.

Further, it appears that the College's admissions representative does have an impact on the students in the high schools. More emphasis should be placed in this area including more visits to the schools and to increase the distribution of high quality publications. Also, the slide presentation shown in the high schools was listed as one of the reasons why a student made her decision to attend PGCC. If this can be shown to be effective through other studies, it should be emphasized as a marketing tool. In addition, since no students in the present study heard about the College through a teacher or counselor, this area should be investigated to determine what the College can do to obtain better cooperation with these important influencers.

In the advertising area, the College should continue and expand its newspaper advertising, since it seems to be an effective marketing tool. However, unless the College puts more emphasis in its radio ads by advertising more often and on more stations, it will not be an effective

tool. If the College does advertise on more stations, the stations should be selected according to age cohorts, with the ads for each station written (including music) for that particular audience.

Cable TV is another area that the College should empahsize. Since all of the students who receive cable watch the College's channels, this could prove to be a powerful marketing tool. The College could produce programs highlighting its faculty, programs, courses, services, and facilities, as well as other programming of general interest. It is safe to assume that other members of the houshold will watch the College's programs with the student and, if the programs are of enough interest, nonstudent housholds also will tune in to the College's channels. If the programs are of sufficient quality, this could enhance the image of the College which, in the long-term, will enhance its total marketing efforts.

Since mailing the Schedule of Classes to all of the homes in Prince George's County is in question as an effective marketing tool, another pilot project should be conducted. Using target zip codes, slick, colorful brochures could be sent to homes announcing registration and the availability of "free" Schedules. If this proves effective, it should be initiated on a larger scale.

Conclusion

The motivational (Cross, 1983) and situational (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) theories do play a role in determining effective marketing tools. The College must now target specific groups and send them information that they will process. Merely blanketing the market area with generalized

information is not an effective marketing tool for attracting students. However, it is effective in creating name recognition and in helping to enhance the image of the College, so it should not be altogether eliminated.

Another area that should be emphasized by the College is its proximity to high tech industry. Since the Fall, 1984, quantitative study showed that 94.1% of the students listed going to college to prepare for a career/job as important/very important, and since it also was mentioned in the present study, this seems to be an important factor for current and potential students. Thus, it should be a part of the College's marketing message.

In addition, when targeting audiences for the College, the differences in the age cohorts seem to be minor. The major difference between age cohorts appears to be in the radio stations to which they listen. Also, it seems as though publications need only be written for two age cohorts, under 20 and everyone else, if they are targeted by age. Because the differences by age are minor, other variables for targeting audiences need to be identified.

When producing publications, the College should emphasize slick and colorful publications that are professional and high quality in appearance. Also, the publications should emphasize the people at the College, using bright and colorful photographs.

Further, when someone inquires about the College, that person should be sent more than just an application form. The Viewbook seemed to be an effective marketing tool and, since it is less expensive than the

Catalog to produce, may be a more cost-effective method of marketing the College.

Finally, evaluation of marketing tools must be an ongoing process. This is especially true of the College, which is in a rapidly changing environment.

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